NEW LIGHT ON EARLY BUDDHISM

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On Buddhist Historiography

One of the chronologically older *suttas* in the Theravada Buddhist canon has an interesting observation bearing on the early Buddhist attitude toward what is traditionally called history. This passage occurs in the *Brahmajala Sutta* (The Perfect Net) of the *Digha Nikaya* (Book of Long Discourses). Therein the Buddha says that among many things for which the common man might praise him is that, unlike his contemporary ascetics and Brahmans, the Buddha does not indulge in 'low' talk (*tiracchanakatha*—literally animal talk). The passage then goes on to give a list of topics regarded by the Buddha as varieties of such 'low' talk. The list includes tales of kings and their high ministers, armies and wars, stories of communities, villages, trading towns and cities, countryside or heroes, and adventures on the seas.

Now precisely these are the stuff out of which the chronicles of history are made. On this reckoning the Buddhists should not have evolved a historical tradition of their own.

There is another reason why history should be either impossible or irrelevant for the Buddhist. The three principles which characterize human existence, as understood by the Buddhists, are impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and the complete absence of a lasting entity such as soul (*anatta*). If everything is impermanent then all events are also essentially impermanent by their very nature and such fleeting or evanescent events can have, philosophically speaking, no intrinsic 'historical' value.

Finally, time, as such, has no independent existence for the Buddhists. It is only a concept, a mental construct, a convenient matrix against which the flow of certain human activities can be sequentially placed. As examples, Buddhaghosa, the celebrated Pali commentator of the fifth century A.D., refers to the common usage as bathing time,

eating time, sleeping time, etc. What we are talking about, Buddhaghosa seems to imply, is a set of human behavioural patterns occurring in certain sequences and we designate each by affixing to it the concept of time. But time *per se* does not exist; it is at best a convenient concept and at worst an illusion.[2] And if time as such does not exist, is there then any possibility of constructing history which is essentially anchored to time?

But the paradox is that the Buddhists, more significantly than the Brahmanists, developed a pronounced historical outlook firmly moored to the life of the historical Buddha and his *nirvana*[3] with which began the scheme of Buddhist chronology now current in all Buddhist countries. Here I would like to examine the circumstances in which Buddhist historiography evolved and the peculiar forms which it took in the great Buddhist chronicles beginning with the Ceylonese *Dipavamsa* (**Chronicle of the Island of Ceylon** of the early fifth century A.D.) to *Sasanavamsa* (**Chronicle of the Religion,** a Burmese work of 1861 A.D.).

II

The three most memorable events for the Buddhists during the formative stages of Buddhism were the birth and the early life of Gotama, his Enlightenment which made him the Buddha (*sambodhi*) leading to his preaching of the *ḍhamma* (truth, norm, way) and his final departure from the totality of human becoming (*parinibbana*). The Buddha himself seems to have been aware of the 'historical' nature of his pursuit and discovery of the truth underlying existential becoming and the significance of the way to freedom from the human predicament which he claimed to have discovered. In the *Mahavagga*, (a part of the *Vinaya* or code of Buddhist monastic life) for instance, we are given a first hand account of the first few weeks of the Buddha's life after the Enlightenment. The Buddha said that he had "come into the possession of this truth (*dhamma*), profound, difficult to see and comprehend, tranquil, excellent, transcending logic, subtle and capable of comprehension only by the wise." After some initial hesitation, for fear that his preaching it may not have the desired result on the people at large and would result only in frustration, he decided to "set into motion the wheel of the Law" and "throw wide open the doors to immortality" (*amata*) to those who had the capacity to understand what he was saying.[4] Thereafter the Buddha went on preaching his *dhamma* for the next forty-five years until

his departure from the world at the age of eighty at Kusinara in the Himalayan foothills.

By all accounts the impact of the Buddha's personality on his followers, and those who became members of the Buddhist community in the following centuries, was of extraordinary significance in the making of the Buddhist historical consciousness. Two distinct trends emerged from this impact. One was the gradual development of the concept of the Buddha as a 'Great Person' (*mahapurisa*) finally elevating him to a transcendental 'Person'. The second was the emerging identification of the Buddha with the *dhamma*. Two interesting passages from the Theravada canon indicate the process of this identification. One concerns the monk Vakkali who longed to see the Buddha personally. The Buddha said to him that his flesh and bone body was of little consequence for he who sees the Buddha sees the *dhamma*, and he who sees the *dhamma* sees the Buddha. The second passage concerns the last days of the Buddha when he tells his grieving followers that after his death the *dhamma* would continue to be their teacher ever after. Then there is another passage in the *Agganna Sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* where it is stated that the Norm-body (*dhamma-kaya*) is the designation (*adhivacana*) of the *Tathagata*. Finally, the *Milinda Panha* (**Questions of King Milinda**, a text of the first century B.C.—first century A.D.) carries the trend forward. In a conversation, the Indo-Greek King Milinda Menander—(middle of second century B.C.) asks the Buddhist monk Nagasena how the monk could vouch for the historical existence of the Buddha if the monk or any of his immediate predecessors could not claim to have seen the Master personally. The monk replies that the historicity of the Buddha must be perceived through the *dhamma*-body.[5] The *Tathagata* (one who had fared thus) and his *dhamma*, thus, became focal points in the Buddhist consciousness as the one was identified with the other.

This identification of the Buddha with the *dhamma* helped the Buddhists formulate a nexus between the two levels of reality called the *sammuti* and the *paramattha* (phenomenal and transcendental). The Buddha, in his earthly life, operates within the bounds of the phenomenal world whereas the *dhamma* belongs to the transcendental realm. The phenomenal is the realm of 'facts' to be perceived through the operation of the factors of form, sensation, perception, 'confections' and consciousness and ascertained through the instrumentality of the initial and final application of thought-processes (*vitakka* and *vicara*).[6] On the *paramattha* or transcendental level what subsists is truth which is without

a beginning or end, eternal and timeless, uncreated and changeless. Truth, in this context, cannot be the subject of history which is a chronicle of events set in a vertical (time) and horizontal (space) continuum. But the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the two levels is arched over in the Buddhist historical consciousness by the process of identification between the *dhamma* (*paramattha*) and the historical Buddha. The Buddha is born, grows into youth and old age, and dies and hence belongs to the *sammuti* or phenomenal world of 'facts' reflecting events.[7] But he is also the *dhamma* and when the *dhamma* 'becomes' the Buddha, history begins. The *dhamma* as preached by the Buddha ('personified') becomes the 'watershed' in the continuum of human history for the Buddhists. They, together, invest human life and its history with an extraordinary significance bringing about a qualitative change through the promise of liberation. The transcendental and the phenomenal are thus linked together to initiate the processes of 'history'. They become, so to speak, two sides of the same coin and just as light can only be comprehended in the context of darkness, the *dhamma* 'enters' the stream of history through the Buddha discovering and preaching it. Time, as the monk Nagasena states, may be a ceaseless flow, an unending circle, but segments of this circle become illumined by the appearance of the Buddha who is, in himself, the 'core' of the Buddhist historical consciousness.[8]

The phenomenal world is described by the Buddhists as comprising many and diverse elements (*anekadhatu nanadhatu*) whose parameters extend from the gods in their various heavens through the world of men and animals to the denizens of the nether regions including the world of spirits (*petas, pisacas*), Gods, Yakkhas (goblins), nagas (half-human, half-snake), Maras (Evil Ones) as well as the various social categories such as the 'caste-clusters' (*vannas*).[9] The history of the Buddha, therefore, must necessarily include all these categories and since the Buddha himself is a *Mahapurisa* various events in his life such as his conception, birth, going forth into wilderness, Enlightenment, preaching and passing away are 'naturally' accompanied by extraordinary terrestrial events such as earthquakes. The Buddha's knowledge, explains Buddhaghosa, extends over the three worlds—*samkharaloka, sattaloka* and *okasaloka* (existence sustained by 'food', all sentient creatures and the world extending across the entire spectrum from the sun and moon in all directions). All these become essentially parts of Buddhist 'history'.[10]

Unique though is the appearance of the Buddha, it is no accident

because it follows the law of *dhammata*.[11] *Dhammata* is one of the two terms of crucial significance in our understanding of the development of the Buddhist historical consciousness, the other being *samavaya*. The dictionary meaning of the term is "conformity to *dhammniyama*. . ., fitness, propriety; a general rule, higher law, cosmic law, general practice, regular phenomenon, usual habit." Buddhaghosa explains *niyama*[12] as the way to an end or aim causatively related to *kamma* (Sanskrit: *karma*), seasons, seed, physical states and nature. It is *dhammata* which is the basis of the order in the universe, the principle that separates chaos from cosmos. The operation of *dhammata* is based on three factors namely the substratum of causal relationships (*hetu*), subdivided into five categories such as the influence of past action, conditioned by supernatural factors, a combination of diverse occurrences, occasioned by relationships within a species and those related to the observable order of things *(pubbekata, issaranimmana, samgati, abhijati* and *ditthadhamupakkama*).[13] *Dhammata* is further understood as an integral effect of a congeries of fivefold epiphenomenal processes included under the rubric *samaya* comprising *samavaya, khana, kala, samuha* and *hetu*. *Khana* and *kala*[14] are explained as the opportune moment and the general process of time; *samuha* is a causally related aggregation and *hetu*, as mentioned above, is the substratum of causal relationships.[15] The theory of *dhammata* is first adumberated in relation to the theory of 'former' Buddhas. The *Mahapadana sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* gives us the earliest version of this theory when it purports to give an account of the five Buddhas preceding Gautama. This concept of former Buddhas preceding Gautama had found general acceptance among Buddhists by 250 B.C. as is indicated by the fact that the great Buddhist emperor Asoka (*circa* 272-232 B.C.) tells us in one of his inscriptions that he enlarged the *stupa* ('funerary' or 'votive monument' of Konagamana, a former Buddha), a second time. This *sutta* also gives us an idea of the early Buddhist conception of the span of time named *asamkheyyas, kappas* and *yugas* ('incalculable' and aeons). This theory of the former and "Buddha To Come" had a part to play in Buddhist historiography as will be indicated below.[16]

The most interesting idea, however, is that of *samavaya*[17] which may be described as the specific Buddhistic theory of causation, historical or otherwise. It may be rendered as "harmony of antecedents" which is "a concurrence of causal relations established by their bringing about a common result." In the Buddhist view, then, every event has two aspects. One is that it is unique and the other is that it is the result of not one

cause but the concatenation of diverse potentially causative factors coming into a unique relationship which makes the event itself unique. The point emphasized by Buddhaghosa is that this theory specifically rejects all theories of 'single causes' (*ekakaranavada*) producing a given effect or event. The assumptions are that an event is caused not by one given cause but by a variety of potential causes and that these potential causes must enter a harmonious relationship in order to produce a given result. The result ensues because potential causes are actuated when they act in 'concord' to produce a common result, and not because of a haphazard or accidental combination of various antecedents. The event occurs because the diverse causes act in harmony and in the absence of such harmony (*samavaya*), there could be no result. The illustration given by Buddhaghosa is that of the seed and the sprout, the former being regarded as the cause of the latter. But in order that the seed may transform itself into a sprout it must be good, must fall on appropriate soil, at the appropriate time, must be nurtured with adequate supply of water and other nutrients and that all of these must act in harmony which alone transforms the potentially causative factors into a result whereby the seed grows into a sprout. The main thrust of the argument is to exclude all theories of absolutism, nihilism, chance, accident and indeterminism.[18]

III

The Buddhists formulated three distinct ideals related to the 'saviour' and his role in history. One was that of the *Paccekabuddhas* (individual Buddha) who secure their own *nirvana* but do not preach and numerous such Buddhas may exist simultaneously. The *Paccekabuddha*, as pointed out by a recent study[19] is related to the pre-Buddhist Vedic *muni* (hermit) and the Brahmanical *samana* (ascetic) and is somewhat of an intrusive and peripheral phenomenon in the history of Buddhism. Then there was the ideal of the *Bodhisattva*, the being of wisdom and compassion who defers his own *nirvana* in order to remain in the world—to save suffering humanity. This concept became a major factor in the development of Mahayana Buddhism because of its 'quasi-theistic' and saviour role.[20] Finally, there was the *Sammasambuddha* (the totally enlightened being) who preaches to the world the *dhamma*, and establishes an organization of monks and nuns (*samgha*) as an instrument of continuing succour. Neither the *Paccekabuddha* nor the *Bodhisattva* are capable of a *vamsa*,

a tradition of historical continuity both in doctrine and organization. It is this concept of *vamsa* that is of great significance in our understanding of elements comprising Buddhist historiography.

There are more than a dozen works which purport to be histories related to the vicissitudes of Buddhism. Almost all of these are called *vamsas* (chronicles) of traditions (*parampara*). The transmission of a tradition of the Buddha (or Buddhas), the *dhamma* in its textual and doctrinal form and the lineages of teachers in the *samgha* (monastic fraternity) is the *raison d'etre* of the Buddhist history called the *vamsa*. Around the core of this tradition are woven accounts of kings and emperors, regions and countries, and accounts of single monasteries and relics of the Buddha literature and even "Buddhas to Come".

The choice of the term *vamsa* for history in the place of the more traditional *itihasa* and/or *purana* ("Thus it has been" and chronicle of yore) is of significance in our understanding of Buddhist historiography. As pointed out in the beginning, the Buddhists had a derogatory attitude toward *itihasa*. The early Buddhists used a variety of terms for historical or quasi-historical accounts floating about during their days. The simplest is *katha*—a tale or a story, legendary or otherwise—and the common varieties of such narratives are characterized as species of 'gossip' indulged in by narrators aiming to entertain or by women gathered at a village well. Their basic nature is called unedifying and hearsay or simply imaginative or unverified information. We have already referred to *tiracchanakatha* ('low' or 'animal' talk) which included tales of kings, warriors, wars, cities, regions, sea and heroes. The other two terms used are *akkhana* and *akkhayika*, the first exemplified by the two great epics—the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and the others simply called lore such as lore of the sea or nature. Buddhaghosa adds to these the term *itihasa* which he defines as an ancient tale (*puranakatha*) signifying "thus it has been" (*it-ha-asa*) which may include narrative categories from the great epics and *puranas* of the Hindus to simple folk tales. In the standard description of the intellectual equipment of a learned Brahman a knowledge of *itihasa* as 'the fifth' (the other four being aspects of the Vedic and Brahmanical lore) is invariably included.[21] It is noteworthy to mention here that history (commonly understood as *itihasa*) is lumped together by the Buddhists as a variety of 'low' or 'unedifying' talk. At no point did the Buddhists deign to call what they compiled as 'histories' as *itihasa* but took special care to designate them as *vamsas*. Properly speaking, therefore, the Buddhist historical consciousness was designed to articulate itself in terms of a *vamsa*, a

chronicle concerning primarily the Buddha, the *dhamma* and the *samgha*, handed down in an uninterrupted tradition of succession of oral, recitational or written tradition. Whatever was relevant to these grand themes became legitimate parts of the *vamsa*—but not *itihasa*. The principle idea was that of an unbroken continuity, whether of pupilary succession or royal and dynastic sequences regarded as relevant to the main purpose of Buddhist history.

That purpose was ethically conceived which was that the composition should provide joy and delight, "full of faith, pleasant and that which consists of various forms" leading to elation. It should be a chronicle handed down from generation to generation. It should be composed for the "furtherance of the teaching (*sasanavuddhi*)", for "the creation of faith among the listeners", to "arouse serene joy and emotion".[22] The titles of these historical compositions give us some understanding of their purport and contents. Some like the *Buddhavamsa* and the *Anagatavamsa* are 'histories' of the Buddhas, past and future or his relics such as tooth (*Dathavamsa*), hair (*Chakesadhatuvamsa*), or the tree under which the Buddha was Enlightened (*Mahabodhivamsa*), or of the *stupas* (*Thupavamsa* and *Dhatuvamsa*) or the history of Buddhism and the Buddhist *samgha* in Ceylon (*Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* and its sequel *Culavamsa*) or Burma and Thailand (*Sasanavamsa*, *Jinakalamali*). Some of these do contain a great deal of material bearing on secular history dealing with rulers of India (up to the time of the great Asoka), Ceylon, Burma and Thailand but such material is a part of the general history of the Faith. The value judgments rendered on these rulers are related more to their relationship with the history of the Faith, and particularly their attitudes toward the Order, than their political or statesmanlike achievements or wars and their governments. Modern scholarship tends to judge them more or less harshly. M. Winternitz states that the Buddhists shared the general Indian inability to distinguish clearly between myth, legend and history to the extent that history merely becomes a branch of 'epic poetry'. In the Ceylonese chronicles historical facts are uncritically lumped together with myths and legends such as the visits of the historical Buddha to the Island to establish the faith there, as also pious legends of the early kings. He would not go so far as to call authors of these works "deliberate forgers and liars" but adds that "they relate things which they looked upon as veracious history, though we, it is true, are compelled to regard much of it as myth, legend and fiction."[23] L.S. Perera finds the influence of the Indian traditions of *itihasa-purana-kavya* genre on the Ceylonese chronicles although in a very limited sense

and emphasizes the role of the concepts of the cyclical nature of time and destiny and especially the imprint of the great theme he calls *Dhammadipa* (Island of Faith) in these chronicles. In A.K. Warder's view the Buddhists "compiled and preserved historical records" for the purpose of tracing "moral regress corresponding to the progress of society to its present stage of civilization", use of legendary kings as examples for contemporary royalty, positing of events concerning the *Buddha, dhamma* and the *samgha* as "momentous events of cosmic significance," the working out of the doctrine of *karma* illustrated by historical examples and the crucial importance of the *samgha* in spiritual as well as mundane life.[24]

That the Buddhist sense of history frequently betrays cosmic overtones cannot be denied. This is due to the Buddhist world-view of events which, as pointed out above, happen across a vast spectrum stretching from the heavens to the nether worlds and are constantly related to those happening "here and now." There is also a penchant for explaining royal characters in terms of the influence of past actions and the eagerness to enlist the services of 'supernatural' beings, such as various classes of gods, genii and spirits, in the furtherance of the glory of the Buddha, his *dhamma* and the *samgha*. In certain cases, the Buddhist interpretation of the career of Asoka is an instance in point. There is also the obvious aim to interpret greatness in terms of the transforming influence of Buddhism on character. Asoka, before conversion, is a monster who almost becomes a saint after his conversion to Buddhism.[25] There is also the influence of 'sectarian' bias against groups whose dissidence in doctrinal beliefs and monastic practices, from the authoritative stance of the established school, is roundly denounced.

These peculiar characteristics can be explained as a result of the process of the growth of historical consciousness and its development in literary traditions preceding the compilation of these *vamsas* or chronicles. Already in the Theravada Buddhist canon (of Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos) certain definite ideas about the nature of the Buddha had been growing through the centuries (fourth to first B.C.) when the canon was taking shape. At the end of this process the Buddha had emerged as a *Mahapurisa* (Supernal Man) and the basic ideas identifying the Buddha and the *dhamma* (the later *Dharmakaya* doctrine) had become common. Secondly, there was in progress the process of the compilation of commentaries (*atthakathas*) on what the Buddha had said in the course of which a great deal of historical material relating to the lives and actions of kings who were contemporaries of the Buddha as

well as those in whose reigns important events in the history of the *samgha* took place. Finally, there was the problem of authenticity based on an unbroken succession of teachers and their disciples going back to the Buddha which became the *parampara*, the basis of a *vamsa*. The importance of royal patronage for the *samgha*, as also for the historical attitudes of the compilers of the chronicles, should also be duly recognized in any evaluation of these works as histories.

But within these limitations these texts do display a consistent historical consciousness nurtured and pruned by a more or less well defined methodology. The tradition (*parampara*) was not considered to be merely a matter of assertion and faith. It related to both doctrinal and organizational history. The material to be included in the *vamsa*, by and large, had to be subjected to critical analysis (*vinicchaya*). The beginning of this critical tradition is ascribed to the Buddha himself through a passage in the *sutta* of the Great Departure (*Mahaparinibbana*) entitled the four great authorities. The Buddha advised his disciples to check critically the authenticity of statements ascribed to him after his demise on the grounds of whether or not such statements were received from the Master himself, statements received from a *samgha* in a given location (*avasa*), from monks recognized for their learning and loyalty to tradition and even one monk known for his scholarship and faithful adherence to the letter and spirit of the doctrine.

Then there was the influence of a method of categorization called the *Abhidhammika naya*. This school, so prominently affiliated with the Theravadins, evolved its own scheme of criteria of reliability of information and categorization. These criteria are listed in a series of questions such as by whom was the statement made, where was it made, what was its purpose, to whom was the statement attributed and how was it transmitted ? The veracity of the material, it is stated further, must depend on factual remembrance and transmission through an unbroken lineage of teachers and elders.[26] There are, thus, four components which enter the making of a historical tradition namely, *vamsa* (chronicle), *tanti* (text), *anvaya* (lineage) and *parampara* (transmissional succession). All of these must be used to determine the 'historicity' of a chronicle.

The result of all this activity in thinking, memorization and compilation created a distinctive Buddhist historiography the value of which must be assessed on its own assumptions. Its limitations, as viewed in the context of modern historical methodology and structuring of material, are too obvious to need comment here. On the other hand, its merits are also not inconsiderable. Many parts of these Buddhist chronicles have

been attested for their general veracity by independent literary, archaeological, numismatic and epigraphic evidence. To characterize their authors as 'deliberate forgers and liars' is *passe* even for Western critics today. But their major interest lies in some of the distinctive features of their historical consciousness. Their sense of chronology is firmly anchored to what they believe to be a specific date (the passing away of the Buddha) which stands in contrast to contemporary Brahmanical historiography. Its theory of causation as implied in the concept of *samavaya* (concatenation of diverse potential causes in a harmonious relationship to produce an 'event') is a distinct advance on contemporary theocratic interpretations of history and its criteria for evaluation of the historicity of given events bespeak a critical attitude in preservation of tradition and the writing of chronicles. By and large their succession lists of kings are fairly trustworthy and the historical material embedded in them does provide a secure framework for arranging an intelligible historical schema. Hagiology; the use of myths ("substance of the collective unconscious"), legends and intervention of supernatural elements in human events are undoubtedly parts of this historiography which was primarily the work of pious monks living in monasteries under royal patronage. But our understanding of the cultural ethos of Buddhism, if it is to be realistic and perceptive, cannot ignore the assumptions and results of the Buddhist historical consciousness and its historiography.

NOTES

1. *DN*. I. p. 9.
2. For the three "signs" see *MV*. pp 16-17; on Buddhist ideas on time see P.M. Tin and Rhys Davids (Trans), *The Expositor* (London. 1958), I, p 78; for Nagarjuna on time see K.K. Inada, *Nagarjuna* (Tokyo, 1970), pp 117-118; F.J. Streng, *Emptiness* (Nashville, 1967), pp. 49-50, 205.
3. P.H.L. Eggermont. *The Chronology of the Reign of Asoka Maurya*. pp. 142-143.
4. For autobiographical details see *KhN*. I, pp 329-332, 374-379; *DN*. I, pp 100 ff, 148 ff; II. pp 8, 55 ff, 108-109; *MN*. I. pp 23 ff. 212 ff, 219 ff. 294, 301; II. pp 329, 484 ff; *MV*. pp 6-10.
5. *SamN*. III. p 120; *DN*. II. p. 118; III. p 66; *MilP*. p 73.
6. For thought-processes see P.M. Tin and Rhys Davids (Trans.), *The Expositor*. I. pp 151-152, 188.

7. For two levels of reality see S.Z. Aung and C.A.F. Rhys Davids (Trans.), *Points of Controversy*, pp 8-12; *The Atthasalini*, p 4.
8. *MilP*, p 51.
9. *MV*, p 37; *DN*, I, pp 55, 86, 104; III, pp 7, 150 ff; *SamP*, I, p 113; *MN*, I, pp 102, 310, 399; II, pp 143, 376ff.
10. *DN*, II, p 211; *MN*, I, pp 103, 320-321; III, pp 95, 162ff; *SamP*, I, p 105.
11. T.W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary*, pp 211, 231, 399, 368, 684-685; DN, II, pp 11-14.
12. *SV*, II, p 432.
13. *MN*, III, pp 19-20.
14. *Atth*, pp 56ff; *The Expositor*, I, pp 76-77.
15. *MN*, III, pp 19-20.
16. *DN*, II, pp 11-14.
17. *Atth*, pp 56ff; *The Expositor*, I, pp 79-81.
18. *Visuddhimagga*, p 44.
19. See R. Kloppenborg, *The Paccekabuddha*.
20. For the Bodhisattva ideal see Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London, 1931); M.L. Matics (Trans.), *The Bodhicaryavatara of Santideva* (New York, 1970) pp 20, 31-33.
21. *DN*, I, p 9; *MN*, II, pp 224, 247, 255; *SV*, I, pp 84, 89-91; *KhN*, I, p 354.
22. B. C. Law (Ed.) *Dipavamsa* (Maharagama, Ceylon, 1959) pp 17, 129-130; B.C. Law (Ed.), *The Dathavamsa* (Lahore, 1924), p 1 ff; N.K. Bhagwat (Ed.), *The Mahavamsa*, p l; W. Geiger (Trans.), *The Mahavamsa*.
23. M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature* (New York, 1933), II, pp 208-221.
24. C.H. Philips (Ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, pp 29-56.
25. See B.G. Gokhale, *Asoka Maurya*, pp 47-48.
26. R. Morris (Ed.) *The Buddhavamsa and the Cariyapitaka*, p viii; W.Geiger, *The Dipavamsa and The Mahavamsa*, p 17. Footnote; *SamP*, I, p 227.

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The *Samgha* and the Laity

One of the oft-repeated arguments in justification of the renunciation in the Buddhist texts is that household life is full of hindrances and it is not easy for one living in the house to follow the spiritual directives completely and lead a holy life.[1] In the earliest stages such a homeless life involved living alone, far away from the bounds of the lay society, an ideal reflected in some of the early texts.[2] But this phase was soon superseded by the emergence of an organized community of monks and nuns localized, for a part of a year or continuously, into fixed residences (*avasas*). The establishment of the Buddhist *samgha* created a paradox. The everyday life of the *samgha* involved two distinct and separate aspects, the spiritual and the mundane. The spiritual aspect demanded that the monk or nun lived at least part of his or her day separate and away from the distractions of worldly life. But the life of the organized *samgha* involved dependence on the householders who alone could supply the *samgha*'s everyday needs in the matter of housing, clothing, medicaments and food. Furthermore, the institutions of renunciation and ordination (*pabbajja* and *upasampada*) inevitably brought the *samgha* into contact with the state and its bureaucracy, which led to the formulation of rules prohibiting categories of persons who had run afoul of the ruler. In conditions where schism threatened the *samgha*, the help of the laity in disciplining recalcitrant members also became necessary for the preservation of the unity and the integrity of the *samgha* itself. In order to secure sustained assistance from the householders the early Buddhists had to offer their patrons a distinct spiritual ideal such as that of 'merit-making' which the *samgha* alone could facilitate. These circumstances created a mutualistic symbiosis giving the laity a much larger and vigorous role in the shaping of the *samgha* polity than was initially conceived by the Buddha and the leaders of the *samgha* after

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of his followers among monks and nuns he seemed to give special attention to such criticism or suggestion when it came from an *upasaka* or *upasika*.[6] The early Buddhist *samgha* seems to have become localised into *avasas* at a very early stage. The prime reason for such localization was the institution of the rain-retreat initiated, we are told, because of public criticism of monks wandering about even during the rainy season. Gradually this trend of localization became a normal mode even during the rest of the year which brought the *samgha* into a sustained and continuing contact with the laity. A large majority of the *Vinaya* rules seem to have been formulated in some of the leading cities and towns of the Buddha's time such as Savatthi, Kosambi, Rajagraha and Banaras. The whole section concerning rules of ordination (*upasampada*), for instance, was laid down in Banaras.[7]

With the localization of *avasas* the interaction between the *samgha* and the laity became constant. The laity constantly observed the behaviour of the monks and nuns and took exception to any mode of behaviour on the part of the members of the *samgha* they perceived as objectionable. All such criticism when conveyed to the Buddha led to laying down of rules to prevent errant behaviour. The *Vinaya* texts constantly refer to the custom of the laity visiting the *viharas* to see monks and nuns and during such visits the contact between members of the *samgha* and the laity led to the *samgha* becoming a part of the larger society.[8] The lay criticism ranged from complaints about breaches of common etiquette to serious moral lapses as a result of this sustained contact. Many of the rules of daily behaviour were laid down as a result of such lay criticism. There was, on the other hand, the constant danger of monks or nuns being in much too close a contact with the laity which came to be regarded as a lapse (*ananulomika gihisamsattha*) and raised questions of moral probity where contact with laywomen was concerned.[9]

Some of the most important contacts involved the state and its administration. Bimbisara and Pasendi Kosala were two of the kings who showed special interest in the Buddha and the *samgha*. Bimbisara's meeting with the Buddha came at the very inception of the Buddha's ministry when the king declared himself to be an *upasaka*. The king gave the Buddha the famous Bamboo Forest where the Buddha spent many a rain-retreat. The institution of the *uposatha* was started at the suggestion of Bimbisara and many of the rules concerning acceptance into the *samgha* came at the insistence either of the king himself or his officers. These led to the prohibition on the admission of serving soldiers,

debtors, thieves and a variety of persons either in the service of the state or had fallen foul of the state. These kings gave to the Buddha and his *samgha* residences and parks and extended to the *samgha* the state's protection. Suddhodana, the Buddha's father, disapproved of the Buddha conferring admission on his son Rahula as a result of which the Buddha had to lay down the rule that novices be not admitted without their parents' permission. In some cases members of the *samgha* invited royal displeasure by frequenting parks or pools reserved for the royalty and the Buddha had to make new rules to prevent such occurrences. The *samgha* had to be very careful about its relationships with the state and its officers whose displeasure could create difficult situations for the *samgha* and its activities. These relations were premised on the assumption that while the *samgha*'s autonomy was inviolate the *samgha*, on its part, could not disregard the needs and demands of the political order and tacitly accept the supremacy of the state over its entire territory. Indeed, royal patronage facilitated not only the day-to-day activities of the *samgha* but also secured prestige for the new movement. Other important rules concerning the use of meat, the employment of persons to look after monastic residences such as *aramika* (park-supervisor), acceptance of gifts like robes, medicines and buildings came about because of interaction with high officers of the state.[10] But such interaction also brought with it inherent dangers of too close an association with political power which, if unchecked, would have seriously jeopardised the integrity of the *samgha*. The early Buddhists, therefore, had to draw a fine line between advantages and dangers in its relationships with the state as is indicated by the list of ten dangers encountered by the monks in dealing with royalty.[11]

But contact with royalty was at best occasional whereas interaction with the public at large was a matter of everyday life. This became intensified as the size and locations of the residences grew apace with the admission of numerous monks, nuns and novices. The everyday behaviour of the members of the *samgha* came under constant scrutiny by the public who expected these members to be models of seemly deportment, dress and etiquette. A large number of rules deal with these matters. The institutions of the *upajjhaya* (preceptor) and *acariya* (teacher) were introduced to meet such scrutiny. Some members of the public expected the monks and nuns to assist them in matters of daily care or to display supernatural powers. It is here that the law-makers had to take a definite stand and prevent members of the *samgha* from forgetting their main purpose in renunciation. The rules against monks

distinctively Buddhist lay society which led to the isolation of the *samgha* from society. Under such circumstances what survived was the wealthy and often esoteric monastic complex which could easily be destroyed by the sword of the invading Turk. In Ceylon and the Theravada countries of Southeast Asia the *samgha* continued to play its social role and drew its support and strength from the Buddhist laity which ensured for the *samgha* continuity of life and tradition.

NOTES

1. *MN*, I, p 229.
2. *KhN*, pp 274-278.
3. *MV*, pp 5-6, 10-13.
4. *MV*, pp 42-43.
5. *PapS*, I, pp 131; 135-136, 147; II, p 268; *SamP*, I, pp 110,172-173
6. See A.K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi, 1970), p 60.
7. *MV*, pp 12 ff; *Par*, pp 184, 188, 215 ff, 241, 305, 391-392; *Pac*, pp 35, 132, 133, 214-217, 237-239, 366, 371.
8. *Pac*, p 28; MV, p 234; *CV*, pp 12-13.
9. Pac, p 224; 372; *MV*, pp 42-43; *CV*, pp 9, 12.
10. *Pac*, pp 140, 160, 165, 241, 348; *Par*, pp 55, 353, 368; *MV*, pp 37, 38, 77-78, 86-87, 105, 160, 226, 239, 262.
11. *Pac*, pp 211-213.
12. *Pac*, pp 35, 36, 38-40, 132, 133; *Par*, pp 113 188, 194 ff, 198-199, 214-217, 417, 418; *MV*, pp 57, 78-79, 88, 106, 118, 119.
13. *Pac*, pp 103-106, 110-111, 112-114, 126, 221 ff, 237- 238, 239, 245, 391-392, 482, 484; *Par*, pp 215 ff, 232-233, 241, 258 ff, 305, 356, 366; *MV*, pp 53, 55, 93, 100, 145- 148, 235-236.
14. *Pac*, pp 27, 92, 101, 124, 142, 144-145, 146, 150-151, 153, 218-219, 225, 330, 354, 364, 407, 409, 469, 470, 473, 475, 487, 488; *Par*, pp 88-90, 269, 274, 295, 309, 322, 323, 325, 327, 341, 345, 363; *MV*, pp 145, 205-206, 208-209, 211-212, 213, 331; *CV*, p 20.
15. *Pac*, pp 234, 283, 302, 306, 311-312, 333, 340, 346, 353, 380, 386, 391, 393-394, 396, 400, 403-406, 408, 410, 427, 433, 466, 471, 476, 480; *Par*, pp 44 ff, 48 ff, 182 ff, 190 ff, 290.
16. *Pac*, 115-116, 128, 361, 363, 374, 425; *Par*, pp 170 ff; *MV*, pp 154, 171, 230-231, 240-241.
17. *Pac*, pp 109, 241, 343, 369, 389, 413; *Par*, pp 339, 350; *MV*, pp 82-83, 158-159.
18. *Pac*. pp 15-26, 52-53, 72; Par, p 279; *MV*, pp 76, 77, 100, 144, 146, 159, 160, 218, 254, 259, 296 ff, 308; *CV*, p 32.

distinct religious and occupational categories under the rubric 'Brahmana'

II

Of these four categories, the first, called *pubbaka isayo* (sages of yore) may need only be briefly mentioned here. These were Vasittha, Vamadeva, Kassapa, Bhagu, Yamataggi, and others whose names figure among the composers of some of the Vedic hymns. They are called 'hymn-makers' (*mantanam kattaro*), whose compositions the Brahmanas of later sages simply learned by rote and recited at length. The Buddha praised the simplicity of their life-styles and the high-mindedness of their spiritual quest, lamenting the fact that their descendants had fallen so low from the standards set by their forebears. There is no criticism of these sages, much less any hostility or antipathy toward them.[7] A few others are simply called *isi*, explained as "a holy man, one gifted with special powers of insight and inspiration, an anchorite, a seer, sage, saint 'master'. The term "anchoret", or anchorite, has the meaning of "one" who renounces the world to live in seclusion, usually for religious reasons; hermit, recluse."[8] Among such *isis* are Asita and Devala who are so called as a matter of honour and respect rather than for any hymn-making activity on their part.[9]

The second and third groups comprised professional priests such as *purohitas*, who performed ritual services for the kings and also a variety of other services, and those who are called *mahasalas*, or wealthy Brahmanas. Many of the second group were also *mahasalas*, and the main distinction between *purohita* and *mahasala*, is that while all *purohitas* could be called *mahasalas*, all *mahasalas* were not necessarily royal *purohitas*. The stock description of such a Brahmana is given as "a repeater (of the sacred words), knowing the mystic verses by heart; one who had mastered the Three Vedas, with the indices, the ritual, the phonology, and the exegesis (as a fourth), and the legends as a fifth; learned in the idioms and the grammar; versed in Lokayata sophistry, and in the theory of the signs on the body of a great man".[10] The post-canonical *Milinda Panha* repeats this description with slight variations, saying that the duty of these Brahmanas was "concerned with the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*; with the knowledge of the lucky marks (on the body), of legends, *Puranas*, lexicography, prosody, phonology; verses, grammar, etymology, astro-

the performance of Brahmanical rituals for the king. Vassakara and Sunidha, the former specifically mentioned as Ajatasattu's *purohita* were involved in erecting fortifications for the city of Pataliputta in anticipation of an attack by the Vajjians. In the *Culladhanuggaha jataka* (No. 374), the Brahmana is described as well trained and skilled in archery, while at another place a Brahmana is described as a *navakammika* Bharadwaja, who obviously had to do with construction work.[22] Elsewhere, we are told of Brahmanas going to the Yona and Kamboja regions (probably the North-West Frontier Province and the Kabul region) for trade. The story of Kasibharadwaja Brahmana indicates that Brahmanas were engaged in farming.[23] Kasibharadwaja obviously was a rich farmer, for he used 500 ploughs (obviously a round number again).[24] The point to be made is that the Brahmanas of the period discussed here formed a functionally varied group, performing not only the prescribed Brahmanical ritual but also, and often in addition, following a variety of callings. These Brahmanas, from the royal *purohitas* to rich farmers, were an influential group, and their acceptance or rejection of the Buddha and Early Buddhism was of vital significance to the history of the new movement. Many of these Brahmana *gahapatikas* lived in widely scattered areas in Magadha, Kosala, the Sakya region, Avanti, and Dakkhinapatha and they especially congregated in the great cities of Rajagaha, Pataliputta and the Savatthi.[25]

Many of these Brahmanas claimed to belong to and were proud of their *gotta* purity. The most common *gotta* mentioned is that of Bharadwaja; also mentioned in our texts are Brahmanas belonging to Kassapa, Assalayana, Akasa, Kondanna Kosiya, Kaccayana, Gotama, Parasariya, Kanhayana, and different kinds of priests, such as *addhariyu (adhvaryu)* and *udicca* Brahmanas.[26] Many of these *gotta* names, such as Gautama, Bharadwaja and Kasyapa, are Vedic, and the term *gotra*, as Brough points out, had become so elastic in its usage that it sometimes denoted an exogamous unit, a family, or even social status generally.[27]

From the above, it is possible to arrive at some broad generalizations. One is that by 500 B.C. Brahmana penetration had proceeded into areas that once had been declared unfit for Brahmana residence and functions. This was especially so in Magadha, Kosala, Avanti and parts of Dakkhinapatha, where the existence of *Brahmanagamas* and *brahmadeyya* lands indicates widespread Brahmana colonization and acquisition of large landed properties, with quasi-feudal rights. Secondly, the Brahmanas either as *purohitas* or ministerial functionaries, had come to occupy strategic positions in the political, social and cultural life of the

were converted in large urban centers, such as Savatthi, Rajagaha and Vesali. Names of some nine *paribbajakas* who joined the Buddhist monastic fraternity also are listed. Some of them, such as Sandaka, also asked their own followers to join the order, and one, Acela Kassapa, joined the order after being a *paribbajaka* for 30 years. Similarly, the same sources provide the names of some 27 Brahmanas—outside of the list of famous monks who were Buddha's followers (Sariputta *et al*)—and of these seven claimed Bharadwaja as their *gotta*. Like the *paribbajakas*, these Brahmanas also joined the order after their encounters with the Buddha in large cities.[35]

On the role of ex-Brahmana monks and nuns in the Buddhist movement from the time of the Buddha to about the first century B.C., further interesting evidence is given in the verses of the *Thera-Theri gathas* and in the biographical information given in the commentary on these collections of verses. The list contains 332 names, and its social composition gives us some idea on the nature of what, for want of a better term, may be called the Early Buddhist Elite. Of these 332 individuals, 261 are monks and 71 are nuns. Of these 332, the social origins of four (three monks and one nun) are unknown . Of the rest, 134 or 40.8 per cent (117 monks and 17 nuns) are described as being former Brahmanas; 98 or over 29 per cent (74 monks and 24 nuns) belonged to the *Gahapati* or *Vessa* group; 75 or over 22 per cent (53 monks and 22 nuns) may be said to belong to the Khattiya order; 10 (seven monks and three nuns) may be called members of the so-called degraded classes of society. Of the 134 Brahmanas in this group, 27 were scions of *Mahasala* families, but 107 belonged to commoner Brahmana families.[36]

A more significant piece of evidence on the relationships between the Brahmanas and Early Buddhism and the Brahmana contribution to Early Buddhism comes from the *Etadagga vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikaya*. In this text, the Buddha himself is attributed with statements indicating leadership in various aspects of the Early Buddhist movement and the persons he considered foremost among them (*etadaggam bhkkhave mama savakanam bhikkhunam*. . .). This list contains the names of 41 monks and 13 nuns. Of the 41 monks, 18 belonged to the Brahmana group (43.9 per cent), nine were Khattiyas (most of them being Sakyas), 11 belonged to the *gahapati* or *Vessa* class, one may be called a Sudda (Upali, the master of the *Vinaya* was an ex-barber), and there are two whose affiliations are unknown. The *Thera-Therigatha* group gives us 40.8 per cent Brahmanas among those whose verses were considered

emerging Hindu pantheons. The Brahmanas had then emerged as an exclusive group—"a genteel literati whose magical charisma" rested on their possession of the Vedic lore and its ritual, preserved in a "holy literature, written in a holy language remote from that of everyday speech". They and their rituals, based on the *Vedas*, became the major, if not the only source, of satisfying the desire of rulers, sprung from non-descript dynastic origins, to acquire legitimacy through ritual consecration and affiliation and a share in the charisma of which the *Vedas* and the Vedic rituals were the repository. Anyone rejecting the *Vedas* and its ritual, which by this time was more or less restricted to court circles, threatened directly the sacerdotal authority of the new Brahmana caste. The Buddhist rejection of Vedic authority, which in the earlier period (500-200 B.C.) did not trouble greatly even *purohitas* who declared themselves as *upasakas* of the Buddha, now challenged the very basis of the priestly power entrenched in the court circles. Accommodation, therefore, was practically impossible, and therewith emerged the Brahmanical ire against Buddhism. By that time, however, Buddhism itself was split into rival sects, and Theravada had practically disappeared from large parts of India, only to find asylum in Ceylon, Burma and other countries of South-east Asia.[44]

NOTES

1. *Satapatha Brahmana*, I, 1, 14-16; J. Eggling (Trans), *The Satapatha Brahmana* (Oxford, 1882), I, pp 105-106.
2. H. Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order* (London, 1882), pp 399-400.
3. *Ibid.*, p 11.
4. *AngN*, I, p 263; II, pp 466-467; P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* (Poona, 1968), I, 1, p 219.
5. For the date of Buddha's passing away see M.M. Singh. *JIH*, XXXIX/iii (Dec. 1961), pp 359-363; for the chronology of the Pali Canon see M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature* (New York, 1971), II, pp 17ff.
6. For a definition of caste see J.H. Hutton. *Caste In India* (Cambridge, 1946), pp 42 ff; G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India* (Bombay, 1969), pp 173, 177.
7. For the Pali list see *DN*, I, p 91; *MN*, II, pp 433, 472. *AngN*, II, p 472; for their Vedic identities, see A.A. MacDonell and A.B. Keith. *Vedic Index*

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4

Early Buddhism and the Urban Revolution

It is now generally accepted that Early Buddhism rode to popular acceptance on the crest of a significant urban revolution that swept across large parts of the Gangetic region in the sixth century B.C. A variety of conditions brought this revolution into being. The progressive clearing of forests brought larger areas into agricultural production. The use of iron tools, beginning from about the seventh century B.C., increased agricultural productivity leading to larger commodity surpluses available for exchange in trade and commerce. The easy availability of metals, copper and silver, led to an increasing use of coinage, facilitating both short-haul and long-distance trade. These early punch-marked coins were issued by guilds of bankers and merchants and later by tribal oligarchies. The emergence of well-defined trade routes bound together far-flung areas of the subcontinent. All these helped create a new and powerful class of merchants and bankers, the greatest of whom was Anathapindika of Savatthi, a contemporary of the Buddha and one of his greatest patrons. The story of his buying the Bamboo Forest from Prince Jeta and his construction of a great monastery for the Buddha in Savatthi is a celebrated event in the history of Early Buddhism. Along with this new mercantile class, a new kind of state was also beginning to emerge about the time when the Buddha was completing his long ministry of forty-five years. The most prominent representative of this political transformation were the kings Bimbisara of Magadha (*circa* 545-493 B.C.) and Pasendi of Kosala, both of whom were claimed by the Buddha as his personal friends and patrons. The power of these monarchies, especially Magadha, was based on new kinds of armies and instruments of war as well as the expressed needs of the new mercantile class.[1]

Two distinct sets of generalizations may be made reflecting the

who, we are told, gathered at Rajagaha in the First Council soon after his demise. If the traditional *Cullavagga* account is to be believed, Upali was responsible for the compilation of the *Vinaya*, and Ananda for the *Dhamma*.[3] Upali and Ananda undoubtedly drew upon the recollection of many of the assembled members of the Council either for corroboration of or augmentation of their own contributions. This has a bearing on the nature of Early Buddhism as preserved in the Pali tradition, and will be dealt with later.

III

Among the cities discussed here, Savatthi has the pride of place, being mentioned as many as 593 times out 1009, or 58.77 per cent of our sample. By another computation which includes materials from the *Samyutta* and *Anguttara Nikayas*, of the *sutta* included in the four *Nikayas*, as many as 871 *suttas* were delivered in Savatthi; of these, 844 are associated with the Jetavana monastery, 23 with the Pubbarama and 4 in the suburbs. The total is made up of 6 *sutta* in the *Digha*, 75 in the *Majjhima*, 736 in the *Samyutta* and 54 in the *Anguttara Nikayas*. This need cause little surprise, since the commentaries explain that the Buddha spent 25 *vassavasas* in Savatthi, 19 of them in the Jetavana and 6 in the Pubbarama.[4] In fact, king Pasendi Kosala proudly claimed that the Buddha was as much of a Kosalan as was the king himself.

Savatthi has been identified with Sahet-Mahet on the banks of the river Rapti near the border of Gonda and Baharaich districts of Uttar Pradesh. The city had three gates, south, east and north, the biggest market place being located between the southern gate and the Anathapindika monastery built on Prince Jeta's land. Access to the city across the Aciravti river was provided by a bridge of boats. The river carried a considerable volume of commercial traffic conducted by professional carriers, and it was also a source of livelihood for numerous fisher-folk. Buddhaghosa mentions that Savatthi had a population of 57,000 families. If we assume that each family had at least four members, Savatthi would then have had a population of 228,000, which is clearly grossly exaggerated. In more realistic terms, we may reduce the term by three-fourths and assume that the population may have been in the neighbourhood of 57,000, which would still make the city a major urban center of the times.

Savatthi was a commercial center of great importance during the

few followers in Avanti during the lifetime of the Buddha. Later, however, a large community grew in Avanti and Sona Kutikanna, a disciple of Mahakaccana, went to see the Buddha at Savatthi and at the behest of his teacher, Mahakaccana, narrated the condition of life and the Order which were so very different from those in *Majjhimadesa*. The main points made in this presentation were that Avanti had few monks so that it was difficult to get easily a chapter of ten fully ordained monks for the ordination ceremony of new entrants, the soil was rough and hard needing the wearing of shoes with thick linings, prevalence of the custom of frequent bathing by the people, the use of sheep, goat and deer-skins as coverlets, and the gift of robes to designated monks. These conditions required modification of several rules for ordination, use of coverlets and shoes and other matters pertaining to monastic life. The Buddha made the requested modifications to suit conditions in Avanti and the south. The mention of plentiful cattle and black soil is interesting as it gives us an indication of the economic role of these two factors.[10]

The other important city mentioned in our sample is Campa (6 times). It lay on a river of the same name, a tributary of the Ganga, and is identified with a site some 24 miles to the east of Bhagalpur in Bihar. It was well known as a commercial center and the capital of the kingdom Amga before its annexation by Magadha. Merchants from Campa travelled to Suvannabhumi, the Malayan Peninsula, for trade. The Buddha visited the city several times as also the monks Sariputta and Vamgisa. Campa had a considerable number of monks resident in its *avasas* as is indicated by an entire *Khandaka* (IX) of the *Mahavagga* being associated with the city. The section deals with the validity or otherwise of certain officials acts of the *samgha*. Campa seems to have lost a great deal of its earlier importance even during the lifetime of the Buddha as a result of its being incorporated by the rising kingdom of Magadha under Bimbisara.[11]

Besides these cities and towns, a number of *nigamas* also figure in our accounts as being associated with the preaching activities of the Buddha. There are at least seven such *nigamas* mentioned by name, such as Kammasadamma, Thullakotthita, Apana, Nadika, Assapura, Vegalimga and Medalumpa. To these may be added Alavi, which was both a town in its own right as also a *nigama*. Of these, Kammasadamma and Thullakotthita were located in the Kuru region and their prosperity lay in their rich agricultural produce, the basis of a rather considerable regional trade. The term *nigama* is specifically used to indicate a predominantly mercantile town, its major economic activity being the

other parts of the Canon, but their number does not seem to be sufficiently large to account for preaching activity over eight months every year. Statistically, the number of *suttas* delivered in urban centers, even in our limited sample, is overwhelmingly large (83.43 per cent) while the rest (16.57 per cent) are distributed over 76 different places, among which are included some towns, *nigamas* as well as villages and the 'countryside' (janapada). The share of rural areas in the total sample is thus very small. It will not be unreasonable to conclude that even during the lifetime of the Buddha the rule of living in a fixed location only for the rainy season, with the rest of the year to be spent moving from one place to another, had assumed the nature of an ideal rather than a reflection of the reality. The localization of the *avasas* had become a fact of the Early Buddhist monastic life during the lifetime of the Buddha himself as is evidenced by such usages as *Kosambaka bhikku*. It will not be hazardous, on the basis of our evidence, to assume that most of the Buddha's preaching was done in urban centers wherein he may have spent extensive periods of time even outside of the *vassavasa* period. The Buddha and his followers maintained an extensive and continuous contact with the lay devotees during his lifetime and the period of a few decades after his demise. But by the beginnings of the fourth century B.C. Buddhism became highly localized in terms of fixed and well-endowed monasteries first drawing upon lay mercantile support but later, and increasingly, dependent upon royal endowments. When the state began to be 'feudalised' after the end of the Maurya empire the *samgha* was also consequently 'feudalised' as it depended on endowments of land. By the time Mahayana came on the scene, this process of 'feudalisation' was far advanced and it left its own philosophical (especially metaphysical) imprint on the character of the evolving Buddhism itself.

Inscriptional evidence from the Asokan and the Sunga-Kanva periods sheds some interesting light on the urban-lay nexus of Early Buddhism and its development up to the rise of the Christian era. Asoka in his Bairat (Bhabru) inscriptions recommends seven texts as deserving special attention. The emphasis seems to be on texts that are of direct relevance to the laity. In the inscriptions from Sanchi and Bharhut the two terms that are frequently mentioned are the *dhammakathika* and the *pancanekayika*. The first referred to the preacher of the *dhamma* and could be taken to mean a preacher especially to the laity. The second means one who has mastered (or memorised?) the five *nikayas* and could be taken to refer to a specialized monastic function related to the

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of the future Buddha, at the birth, at the time of the Enlightenment, at the time of the first preaching, at the time when the Buddha resolves on surrendering the component of life (*ayusamkhara*) and at the time of the final passing away (*nibbana*).[6] In another version, however, the same events are ascribed to the Buddha's marvellous or miraculous powers and the statement is directly put in the mouth of the Buddha himself.[7]

The *Milinda-Panha*, a post-canonical work of perhaps the first century A.D., uses this motif of miraculous occurrence and applies it to situations other than those associated with the Buddha himself. Thus at the moment of the conception of the future Nagasena, "arms and weapons became all ablaze, the tender grain became ripe in a moment, and there was a great rain" (in the time of drought). The occurrence of earthquake associated with events in the life of the Buddha in the earlier texts is now associated with the extraordinary charitable acts of Vessantara. Nagasena, in reply to King Milinda, explains it as being "out of season, it was an isolated occurrence."[8] This seems to be a natural extension of the rule of *dhammata* once associated with the Buddha now being applicable to other exalted beings. But the point is still made that these miracles occur, not as an act of volition on the part of the Buddha or other morally exalted persons, but simply because it is in the nature of things that extraordinary events be accompanied by extraordinary occurrences in nature. The two sets of circumstances, even though concommitant, are not causally related.

The miracles performed by the Buddha are described by the term *patihariya* which is translated as something striking, surprising, extraordinary, special, a wonder or a miracle. These miracles ascribed to the Buddha range from indulging in an exercise of miraculous power so that a person may become invisible to soaring into the sky and sitting cross-legged in space. Soon after his Enlightenment the Buddha performed a series of miracles to effect the conversion of the Kassapa brothers. These were Uruvela, Nadi and Gaya who belonged to the ascetical order of the matted hair. The Buddha created a cloud of smoke, issued flames from his body to subdue the fierce Naga in whose chamber he was assigned residence. The Buddha performed four more miracles of a similar genre and finally converted the ascetics.[9] In another instance, the Buddha cured a laywoman, Suppiya, by healing her wound just by looking at her. In a third case, the Buddha miraculously crossed over along with his followers, the flooded Ganga river even as people were getting ready rafts and boats for the crossing.[10]

Another miracle described in a statement ascribed to the Buddha

Vedas and *Brahmanas* and the ascetic only claimed that he "rose far above the heights achieved by the sacrificial priest" and "magic potency, formerly ascribed to the sacrifice, now began to be attributed to asceticism." We have thus two separate lines of development. One is that reflected in the *Atharva Veda* where the substance of popular magic has been overlaid with priestly ritual and the cult of sacrifice "was penetrated by conceptions of magic." But the juxtaposition of priestly magic with popular magic rests uneasily at best.[19] While priestly and ritualistic magic was sublated and transformed into a higher mysticism by the philosophy of the *Upanishads*, notions and concepts of popular and ascetical magic and supernormal powers continued to be widespread. These notions of miracle working and display of supernormal powers are often referred to in the Buddhist texts as *Gandharivijja* (Gandhari-lore), *Sivaijja* (Shiva-lore) and roundly condemned in instances as *tiracchanavijja* (animal-lore). Shiva-lore is explained by the commentator as the practice of pacification residing in a crematorium. Two other terms, *bhutavijja* and *bhurivijja*, exorcism and alchemy, also refer to the prevalence of popular magical practices. The Buddha condemned these as unbecoming and unprofitable for the higher spiritual life.[20]

When we turn to the subject of the *iddhis*, supernormal or superhuman powers, we find an entirely different view. Not only are these powers accepted as valid and practicable, but a man possessing them is looked upon as worthy of respect. Statements are attributed to the Buddha to the effect that the Enlightened One himself has laid down the path by which an earnest disciple can acquire such powers. The Buddha, however, had two significant reservations about such powers. One was that display of such powers could easily degenerate into "miracle-mongering" which he unreservedly condemned. Secondly, such powers had really little or nothing to do with the realization of the highest ideal, that of *nibbana* (ultimate freedom).[21]

The subject of the miraculous, superhuman and supernormal has often been a difficult one to discuss and explain for modern Western and Indian and Ceylonese Buddhist scholars. This is due to the assumption that Buddhism was a totally "rational" and "scientific" system of doctrine and practice in which the "irrational" had either no place or that its occurrence was due to later accretions and interpolations. Such an argument practically meant reading early twentieth century concepts and values of a totally rational universe capable of complete human comprehension into a phenomenon that first occurred in the sixth century B.C. and developed in a religious, as distinguished

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9

Early Buddhist Kingship

Monarchy was the dominant political institution of the Buddha's time. The Enlightened One was on very cordial terms with some of the leading monarchs of the times whose interest and patronage Early Buddhism appreciated a great deal. Many a rule of the *Vinaya* code was discreetly amended in deference to the convenience of kings such as Bimbisara and Pasendi, the Kosalan. And quite a few scions of royal families joined the order of monks and nuns and played a leading part in the propagation of the creed during its early critical years.[1]

The Buddha came from a world of tribal oligarchs and had nostalgic sympathies for that form of organization whose spirit he attempted to infuse into the structure of his own *samgha*. This world, however, was in a state of disintegration, and his advice to the Vajjians, threatened as they were by the expansionist parricide Ajatasattu,[2] almost sounds like a requiem for the tribal republics of the fifth century B.C. India. Whatever his personal choice in the matter of forms of political organization the Buddha was realist enough to recognize that monarchy had come to stay and, as far as he could see into the future, would remain the dominant form of political organization. He and the Early Buddhists, therefore, came to terms with the institution of monarchy and proceeded to formulate their own political philosophy in an endeavour to influence its development and final form.

The Early Buddhist philosophy of kingship is a compound of three distinct attitudes. On the one hand, the Early Buddhists betray feelings of disquiet bordering on fear about the nature and functions of kingship as it existed in their times. On the other hand, they see no alternative to it and declare it as absolutely essential to prevent humanity lapsing into a state of anarchy. Finally, confronted with the fact of kingship and its absolute necessity for orderly human existence, they attempt to

white umbrella, the jewel, the magic elephant and the magic horse.[41] The wheel is likened to the disc of the sun and is more a mystical symbol than a material object.[42] In order that it may appear before him a *Cakkavatti* has to keep the *uposatha* (fast and penance) on the full moon day, purify himself and meditate.[43] It is his personal acquisition and cannot be handed down in succession and it sinks or slips down a little as the king approaches the end of his life.[44] The umbrella is pure white and stainless, with a handle of firm wood and with many hundreds of ribs.[45] The jewel is bright and beautiful, eight-faced, well-cut, four cubits in thickness and in circumference like the nave of a cart-wheel. Its brilliance is such that it surpasses all and spreads around for a league on every side.[46] The elephant (*uposatho nagaraja*) is described as all white, sevenfold strong, with a strength equal to that of 10,000 men, firm, wonderful in power and capable of flying through the air. The horse is also all white with a crow-black head and a dark mane and able to fly.[47] It is evident that the whole symbolism is in some ways associated with powers of nature, especially the sun. This paraphernalia is secured not through the performance of any Vedic sacrifices but through piety, morality and mystic contemplation. It is not necessarily a gift from some divine source but may be obtained by anyone who is morally elevated, spiritually pure and intellectually and mentally dedicated to morality or *dhamma*.

It is in the concept of *dhamma* that the Buddhist ideas on kingship find their ultimate conclusion. The *cakkavatti* is *dhammiko dhammaraja*. He is devoted to *dhamma*, honors it, is deferential towards it, worships it, makes it his banner and treats it as his overlord.[48] In another text *dhamma* is declared to be the ruler of rulers, the highest in the world.[49] This *dhamma*, as pointed out earlier, is equated with justice (*naya*) and equity (*sama*), rectitude and the highest morality.

In this line of reasoning, then, the state is never an end in itself but rather a means to an end. As an instrument it is possessed of total power that encompasses within its jurisdiction all areas of human activity. It is an awesome power and it is, *per se* neither moral nor immoral. But it cannot exist outside of human beings for it is not just an abstraction or a thought-construct; it can be exercised only through human agencies. It is this association of total power with human beings that creates the dilemma of power. Orderly human existence is not possible without power but power is easily liable to be misused and is often misused. The Buddhists set themselves to find an answer to this problem of total power. Divine retribution as a punishment for the misuse of power, as a theory

45. *MilP.* p 226.
46. *Ibid.*, pp 118, 282.
47. *DN*, II, p 174; also *MilP.* pp 141, 282.
48. *AngN*, I, pp 109-110.
49. *Ibid.*, III, p 151; *DN*, III, p 95.
50. See *DN*, II, p 174.
51. *Ibid.*, II, p 186.
52. *AngN*, I, p 68.
53. *Jat*, II, p 124; also see *Jat*, II, p 368 where the role of the king as rainmaker is referred to.
54. *AngN*, I, p 76; *bahujana hitaya. . . .atthaya, hitaya, sukhaya.*
55. *MN*, III, p 176.
56. *First Separate Kalinga Edict*: S. Bhattacharya, *Select Asokan Epigraphs* (Calcutta, 1960), p 97; there are so many points of similarities between politicial ideals of the Early Buddhists and those of Asoka that it seems that Asoka followed the Early Buddhist political tradition rather than that laid down by Kautalya.
57. *SamN*, I, p 116.
58. *Samanatapasadika* - Commentary on *DN* (London, 1924-1938), I, p 10; *MV*, V, i.

the Buddha ever advised his contemporary kings to disband their armies and beat their swords into ploughshares. Even the great Buddhist emperor Asoka is not known to have disbanded his army after the traumatic experience of the Kalinga war and history knows of Buddhist kings who have waged wars, often very devastating, against other Buddhist kings. Probably the Buddhists recognized that they had little influence in the matter of war and territorial acquisition and felt that the most they could do in these matters was to influence the minds of kings to keep the horrors of war within reasonable limits. The statement of Ajatasattu concerning the distinction between the temporal realm and spiritual life expressed a consistent Buddhist policy toward the state in this respect.

The most frequent challenge came from within. The king had many enemies. As King Milinda says: "If I were to give up my household life and renounce the world, it would not be long I should have to live, so many are my enemies."[15] The king was constantly threatened with plots against his throne and life and had to be guarded at all times. His kingdom may be infested with robbers who are declared to be the common danger in the world.[16] We often get a description of a troubled kingdom harassed by thieves and bandits and it is said that as these become strong the state becomes weak for it becomes unsafe for the ruler to visit the cities and countryside and rule efficiently.[17] An ideal kingdom is described as the territory which is without thorns (*akantaka, Cf* the use of the term *kantaka* by Kautalya) and untroubled (*anuppila*) and men are happy and joyous living in homes with open doors and playing peacefully with children in their laps.[18] It is the duty of the state, then, to rid its territory of all such thorns. The king must punish the wicked and is allowed to use various kinds of punishments to deter potential offenders. In this punitive task the king is given absolute powers to the extent of banishing culprits from his kingdom or even execution of the convicted criminals.[19] The king's use of force and violence in putting down lawlessness is seldom questioned, much less criticized, the only advice given is that he should act with justice in giving punishments. A rhetorical question is raised: Is it possible for a king to rule without violence, injury, causing suffering or death and with *dhamma*? there is no clear answer to it.[20] The implication is that it is practically impossible to rule without the use of force and violence. This means a rather pessimistic view of human nature. The assumption is that human beings will not, in all circumstances and under all conditions, behave righteously and must be kept on the straight and

signs of Great Men (*mahapurisalakkhanani*) even as the Bodhisattva is endowed with them. Like the Bodhisattva, he is possessed of *iddhis* (supernatural powers) and is unique, for there can be no more than one *cakkavatti* at a time in the world (this distinction is reserved for the Buddha alone for there can be no more than one *sammasambuddha* at a time in the world). As in the case of the Buddha the places where a *cakkavatti* was born, crowned, where he wins his most significant victory and where he passes away are declared to be "memorable".[37] The funeral of the *cakkavatti* must be carried out exactly in the same way as the funeral of the Buddha. And after the cremation a *stupa* is to be raised over the relics of his body as in the case of a Buddha, visits and homage to the *stupa* of a *cakkavatti* being declared to be a pious act.[38] The similarities between the status of the Bodhisattva/Buddha and the *cakkavatti* are so clear and striking that the conclusion becomes inescapable that the bases of the *cakkavatti*'s power are no longer regarded as human or rational, much less contractual. In the *cakkavatti* ideal the early Buddhists create the apotheosis of the state. They start with the hypothesis of the separation between the state and religion (*ana* and *dhamma*) and finally end up with making the state subordinate to the *dhamma*. By ascribing *dhamma* as the basis of loyalty to the state they endow it with a charisma which at once becomes an instrument for the legitimization of political power in the state and its control by an agency higher than itself. The state, thus, emerges as a mystic entity controlled by non-rational forces and obeying norms of continuance and dissolution beyond the reach of its subjects. This is a far cry from the earlier hypothesis of contractual obligations and its emergence must be related to the territorial extension and growth of the power of state itself. Under such a state the function of the *Samgha* is consent and advise to the state. But the *Samgha* also takes upon itself, in Buddhist constitutions, the role of the conscience-keeper of the state and is equipped with sanctions far more subtle, and powerful in certain circumstances, than the might of the state itself. The voice of the *Samgha* becomes far more extensive and pervasive than the commands of the state for the organization of the *Samgha* reaches down to the smallest village through the monastery. The dichotomy between *ana* and *dhamma*, with which the early Buddhist speculation on the nature of politics began, still persists, for whereas the state commands the *Samgha* persuades through its spiritual authority. This spiritual authority becomes ranged against a king who ceases to observe the *dhamma* which results in the loss of his charisma and the destruction of the legitimacy of his authority. Opposed to the will of the

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impose order on human society. The sequence of events indicated in such accounts is that there is first a "golden age" of harmony based on *dharma*. A fall from such a state due to disregard for *dharma* leads to divine intervention in sending Manu armed with *danda* and the restoration of order through the institution of the state or more properly, kingship.

The Buddhist account, as given in the *Agganna sutta* of the *Digha Nikaya* is very similar to the above except that instead of divine intervention the people themselves elected a leader, invested him with power to rule over them and agreed to give him a share of their produce as compensation. But the early Buddhist ideas on the state of anarchy or disorder are somewhat more complex than has been hitherto recognized. The purpose here is to examine these ideas in some details so as to arrive at a more precise understanding of what the Buddhists meant when they spoke of disorder or anarchy. We will also attempt to indicate that the Buddhists recognize two distinct possibilities for the emergence of disorder. One is what may be called the pre-statal anarchy while the second may arise even when the state exists and is apparently well-governed. This second possibility, as will be shown below, is not due to the neglect of *dhamma* by the ruler as commonly understood but rather to a failure to comprehend the root-cause of disorder stemming from certain inherent human economic proclivities resulting in social disorder.[1]

II

Before we discuss the Early Buddhist ideas on disorder or anarchy let us determine precisely what is meant by these terms. Dictionary meanings of the term "disorder" state that disorder (verb) means "to undo the fixed or proper order of something. . . the alteration to its marked detriment of a given, desirable or proper order" or a "condition marked by a lack of order, system, regularity, predictability or dependability." To disorder is "to destroy the regular arrangement of," to create "confusion, to disarrange, derange, upset." It may also mean "to make morally irregular, to vitiate, corrupt, to mar, spoil; to violate moral order or rule; to break loose from restraint." Anarchy signifies "absence of government," a "state of lawlessness or political disorder due to the absence of governmental authority," an "absence or denial of any authority, established order or ruling power" or a state "without a chief

and justice (*sama* and *nyaya*). In the second case there is already a ruler in power who is righteous by his own reckoning. But he fails to take preventive action against poverty, the prime cause of theft which in its turn leads to violence and other attendant conditions of disorder. The third possibility, as indicated by the *Jataka* material, stems from a ruler who is positively and intentionally unrighteous. If the ruler is unrighteous his ministers and officers follow his unholy lead and the citizens are ground down by oppression. They desert their villages and towns and take to the jungles where they wander about with their wives and children like preying or hunted animals. Men are unable to reside in their homes because of the fear of governmental oppression for by day they are fleeced by the officers and at night robbers divest them of whatever they possess. To escape their plight they shut their homes and cover them with branches of trees and thorny bushes. Disorder reigns in such a situation. This disorder among the humans affects even the natural order for there is unseasonable rain or the dread of famine. The fruits on the trees lose their natural flavor and famine, pestilence and stark violence stalk the land. The wicked king, by his unrighteous acts, provokes the wrath of *dhamma* which is the basis both of the natural and the human order. Disorder creates unrelieved suffering for the entire realm.[10]

The line dividing order from disorder is thin, indeed. Order signifies a delicate balance between natural desire and unnatural greed or avarice, non-violence and violence, truth and falsehood, poverty and acquisitiveness, filial order and promiscuity.[11] Order is an arrangement characterized by "regularity, predictability and dependability." In an orderly society man can predictably expect to enjoy the rightful fruits of his own honest labour. He can be sure that his wife will not be taken from him by another and stronger person with impunity and that his family will not destroyed so long as he himself answers the demands of *dhamma* as much as the state is expected to rule on the precepts of *dhamma*. Disorder, on the other hand, though also a "system", lacks the elements of regularity, predictability or dependability as also equity and justice. Like *dhamma*, a synonym of order in Buddhist parlance, disorder or *adhamma* also exists at all times. When restrained by *dhamma* it lies dormant; when the control of *dhamma* weakens, either through ignorance or deliberate choice on the part either of the state or its subjects, *adhamma* usurps the political, economic, social and cultural power of *dhamma* resulting in incalculable suffering.

The Buddhists, not unlike Kautalya, have a rather dim view of human propensities. Left to themselves people do not know what is moderation

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12

Dhamma as a Political Concept

Writing in 1903, T.W. Rhys Davids, the doyen among Pali scholars, observed: "The word 'Dhamma' has given, and will always give, great trouble to the translators. It connotes, or involves, so much".[1] Pali studies have made great and significant advances since Rhys Davids wrote, but the difficulty with the term Dhamma persists. A random search for the varieties of its meanings and usage, for instance, reveals more than seventeen different connotations. Dhamma may mean a precondition or a distinguishing attribute, a factor of personality or a state of mind, an ethical quality or an entire system of salvation, a theory in general or earthly existence, a hypothetical construct or a practical precept, Buddhist *Nibbana*, equity, merit, non-violence, compassion, a code of conduct for social groups or individuals including kings.[2] The purpose here is to examine the content of Dhamma in its political connotations and explore the nature and purposes of early Buddhist political theory, such as it is.

The term Early Buddhism needs some definition at this point. By Early Buddhism is meant that creed attributed to the Buddha and/or his chief disciples and commented upon by the great *atthakathacariyas* (Buddhaghosa and Dhammapala) preserved in the Pali Canon and the *atthakathas*. Perhaps the term Theravada Buddhism could be more precise but Thervada is also taken to mean the Indian Pali Buddhism and its developments in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. These developments are outside the scope of the present paper and hence the preference for the term Early Buddhism. In chronological terms this literature is now generally accepted as falling between *circa* 400 B.C. and 200 B.C. for the Canonical parts and between the fourth and sixth centuries A.D. for the great commentaries.[3] The range, in terms of centuries of literary activity, is very extensive indeed but the ideas were

was generally concerned with *bhoga*, wealth or economy, whereas *dhamma* was related to the aims and functions of government of which economy was a part.

The two essential and inseparable parts of the institutions of the state, therefore, were the material and moral welfare of its subjects. The central problem for the early Buddhists, in all their speculations on the nature and functions of the state, as remarked above, was the violence, force and arbitrariness inherent in the exercise of its power. They saw a solution to it by making Dhamma its basis in the hope that a constant awareness of Dhamma would transform the very nature of the state. Buddhaghoṣa, repeating a statement from the *Agganna, Sutta* defines the king as one who pleases others by *dhamma* (*dhammena pare ranjeti'ti raja*)[21] and the ideal Buddhist sovereign is invariably described as *dhammiko dhammaraja*.[22] Dhamma, the *Paramatthajotika* points out, comprises *dhamma* and *vijanana*, a corpus of principles and a method of realizing them in practice.[23] The corpus of principles is based on certain ethical assumptions of early Buddhism. We have seen above that the reality of the power of the state was often likely to manifest itself in the violence of wars or expropriation and arbitrary conduct influenced by despotic ambitions of individual rulers. These tendencies the Buddhists sought to control, if not eliminate, by putting forward the qualities of *avhimisa* (non-violence), *pariccaga* (renunciation) and *sama* (equality). *Dhamma*, in the political sense, therefore, meant the ten ethical qualities of a king, *dasarajadhamma* comprising *sila* (character), *dana* (charity), *pariccaga* (renunciation), *ajjava* (uprightness), *maddava* (gentleness), *akkodha* (non-anger), *tapa* (austerity) *avihimsa* (non-injury), *khanti* (forbearance), *avirodhanam* (non-opposition). The king must know and cultivate the qualities of discretion with regard to *attha* (welfare), *dhamma* (law), *matta* (moderation), *kala* (time), and *parisa* (counsel). Furthermore he should avoid untruth, levity (*hasam*), be of an amiable disposition (*suhadayo*), mindful, courageous and a protector of all.[24] The cultivation of these qualities involves a long and strict regimen of deep meditation and intense and constant introspection. Such a psychological preparation alone would enable the king to comprehend what is *Dhamma* and how to associate it with the everyday tasks of government. It is this combination of *Dhamma*, as a theory of royal conduct, with *cariya* or *vidhana* (procedure or method) that makes a king a moral being which was the ultimate object of the early Buddhist political theory. It is this that creates a condition of *dhammikarakkhavaranagutti*, moral protec-

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13

On the Buddhist Concept of *Attha*

The two most frequently used and versatile terms in Buddhist literature are *attha* and *dhamma*. Though often used in juxtaposition to reflect the dichotomic natures of the demands of the here and the hereafter, they also indicate the prevalence of two distinct philosophies. The term, *dhamma* has been discussed at great length in numerous works on Buddhist thought.[1] The term *attha* needs a similar treatment for a detailed analysis of the various meanings of the term would reveal a corpus of ideas, which in their comprehensiveness, may lead to what may be the closest approximation to the Brahmanical philosophy of *artha*, in Buddhist thought. Such an examination is intended here.

There are as many as twenty-three meanings of the term *attha* scattered about in Buddhist literature and given in the dictionary.[2] These meanings fall into three broadly recognizable categories. First, the term implies "meaning" or "import" of a given word or passage in a literary text. Secondly, it is related to ethical and spiritual effort. Finally, it is also used to imply economic or worldly gain or good and a philosophy of welfare in this world.

The first two categories need not detain us here. Their usage is clear in such terms as *attha* and *byanjana* (meaning and implication) which are an essential part of a textual tradition. The process of comprehending a text or expounding it involves articulation, systemization, analysis, categorization and commentary.[3] As basis of the ethical and/or spiritual effort *attha* is taken to be the comprehension of conditions and their results (*hetu* and *phala*). The Buddha is often declared to be the one who desires the ultimate good of the people where the term *attha* is equated with well-being, ultimate "safety" (*phasu, yogakkhema*). But there is always the awareness of two sets of welfare indicated by the terms *ditthadhammika* and *samparaya* and *lokiya* and *lokuttara*. It is in this

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between the lay communities of the two religions, in their social and economic life, were gradually eliminated.[10]

II

The meaning and implications of the term *attha* are explicated fully in the Buddhist ideas on statecraft. The ruler's principal business is called *atthakarana*, disposal of political or administrative business. In this sense Bimbisara is described as instructing his *gamikas* in *ditthadhammika attha* (business of the world of here and now). King Pasendi is also often described in this sense as engaged in his royal business (*atthakarane nissino*).[11] The king rules over the *rattha* (nation?) and there can be no state without a ruler. But there also occurs the term *ratthika*, an official administering a *rattha* which is obviously an administrative division and in this context *rattha* cannot mean the entire realm. Perhaps *rattha* as the realm indicates an earlier phase of territorial organization when the realm was small in extent whereas *ratthika* came into use when the realm extended so as to include several "*ratthas*" which were distinct tribal-cultural agglomerations included in the total polity.[12] There are several ways of denoting the extent of polity, the most ancient being *antovalanja, bahivalanja, antonagara, bahinagara, janapada,* and *paccantabhumi* which may be translated as inside and outside the palace walls, inside and outside the city, in the countryside and the frontier areas. Another list mentions *gama, nigama, rattha, janapada* as the order of extension of the area of polity. That early in the development of political ideas these units such as *gama, nigama, nagara* and *janapada* had crystalized is indicated by the fact that each had its own distinct *katha* or historical account. Sometimes two other items are included in such lists and they are *pantha* and *rajadhani*, highways and capital city, and in another list *rattha* and *nigama* (marketing town) are included as parts of the realm.[13]

The major territorial division seems to be the *janapada* which may be generally translated as countryside or rural areas as distinguished from cities or marketing towns as organized administrative units. The government and welfare of the *janapada* are described as major goals of the polity for the ideal kingdom, that polity being one wherein the *janapadas* are safe (*khemmatthita*) and houses of people open (*aparutaghara*). Once again we encounter diversity of meanings concerning the nature of these *janapada* units for at times the term is

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The Buddhists are constantly aware that fruitful and constructive economic activity by all the sections of the population is absolutely essential for the existence and growth of the social and political order. This order, however, must be based on the concept of *dhamma* or righteousness. In this *attha* is almost taken as being synonymous with *dhamma* for without *attha, dhamma* cannot exist as much as mere *attha* is both irrelevant and useless without *dhamma*. The nexus between *attha* and *dhamma* is sought to be established through the principle of justice, economic as well as social. Justice is declared to be *samata*, equality or equity and it is in this sense that Asoka speaks of *dandasamata* and *vyavaharasamata*, equality in justice as well as procedure. Asoka envisioned the formation of a commonwealth of morality based on laws that were uniform in their application and universal in their spirit, transcending the narrow interests of castes, tribes and classes.[26] Ghoshal points out the paradox faced by the Buddhists in their concern for salvation; for politics, in certain contexts, appeared to them to be the very antithesis of salvation. But they resolved the contradiction by infusing a sense of moral earnestness in economy and polity.[27] They interpreted the universe as a moral structure which was held together by *dhamma*. When *dhamma* declines, they argued, the universe tends to come apart. When the king is unrighteous the whole realm lives in misery and the very order of nature is subverted for the rains abandon their natural order as there is either drought or there are floods. This strikes at the very basis of economic activity. This economic activity must be aimed at increase of production of goods and services, their equitable distribution and use distinguished by an absence of indulgence or sensuousness. Economic activity involves labour that is earnest and sustained, resulting in plenty and prosperity. An empty rice bowl is never conducive to peace, social or spiritual, and even the monk practising the strenuous exercises called the *dhutangas* needs to eat. Economics is especially vital for the lay society which is ultimately responsible for the continued survival of the monastic fraternity. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, there is no conflict between wealth and moral and spiritual welfare so long as that wealth is secured through righteous means (*dhammaladdha bhoga*). An Anathapindika, the celebrated banker of Savatthi, is never scorned; on the other hand his example is applauded not only for his success in amassing wealth but also, and more so, for his generous support of the Buddha and his Order. *Attha* and *dhamma* are the two wheels joined by the axle of justice on which the chariot of human life and endeavour runs and weakness in either is detrimental to society as a whole.

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14

Buddhism in the Gupta Age

At the dawn of the Gupta age (*c.* 320 A.D.) Buddhism was already over eight hundred years through its history in India. The unity of its doctrine and monastic community had been sundered four centuries before Samudra Gupta (*c.* 350-76 A.D.). Its two broad divisions, Hinayana (more properly Theravada) and the Mahayana encompassed as many as eighteen different sects which, though they followed fairly uniform rules of monastic life and conduct, differed widely about what they understood to be "Buddhism". The Gupta age saw a resurgent Brahmanism with the court circles reviving the ancient Vedic sacrificial ritual and the masses increasingly attracted by the new Puranic Hinduism. Buddhism still maintained some of its old philosophic vigour, but as a "religion" it was obviously on the defensive, increasingly overshadowed by the emerging Tantric cults.

The purpose of this essay is two-fold. It will discuss the state of Buddhism in the various monastic centers and it will examine the social and economic background against which Buddhism lived and progressed from one phase to another. As will be shown later, Buddhism during this age seems to have been well past its original social purpose. The burgeoning "feudal" economy and polity had already permeated Buddhist organization at various levels. What we can observe in it is a number of monastic centers with little or no "organic" relationship to the lay population surrounding them. The old centers had already decayed and the new were riven by sectarian differences in their intellectual pursuits. Tantrism had begun to cast its lengthening shadow, comprising sublime mysticism on the one hand with gross magical ritual on the other.

Two points should be clarified before we begin the subject proper. The first concerns the chronological limits of the age. J.F. Fleet's

monks. The inscription is on the pedestal of a colossal Buddha figure in the *parinirvana* pose and is stated to be the gift of a *Mahaviharasvamin* Haribala, the image being fashioned by Dine. . . masvara.[12] Like the foregoing, this epigraph is also assigned to the fifth century.

The two inscriptions (Fleet, Nos. 63, 70) from Mathura are dated in the Gupta years 135 and 230 (= 454-455 A.D. and 549-550 A.D.), being separated from each other by an interval of over a century. The first is from a broken standing statue, probably a standing Buddha, and mentions it as the gift of the *viharasvamini* Devata who assigns the merit of her act to her parents and all sentient beings, adding that everything is impermanent including *Nirvana*, and stresses the happiness of making gifts. The second inscription is also from the pedestal of a standing Buddha image and mentions the gift as being assigned to all sentient beings. Mathura was famous as a center of great religious significance for the Buddhists, Jains and Hindus. Its antiquities have a continuous history from about the first century B.C. onward and during the time of the Kusanas and Sakas the city enjoyed great prominence as an administrative center as well. Fa-Hsien noticed some twenty monasteries with about three thousand monks and obviously "the Law of the Buddha was still more flourishing." Buddhism, according to the Chinese pilgrim, enjoyed royal patronage in those parts. He says,

> "Everywhere, from the Sandy Desert, in all countries of India, the kings had been firm believers in that Law. When they make their offerings to a community of monks, they take off their royal caps, and alongwith their relatives and ministers, supply them with food with their own hands. That done, (the king) has a carpet spread for himself on the ground, and sits down on it in front of the chairman;—they dare not presume to sit on couches in front of the community."

Yuan Chwang found in Mathura two hundred monasteries with two thousand or so monks. The monks were adherents of the Mahayana as well as Hinayana. He also mentions stupas built by Asoka and stupas dedicated to the Buddha's foremost disciples as well as to Manjusri and other Bodhisattvas. There were also numerous nuns. As mentioned earlier, Mathura was a stronghold of the Sarvastivadins and after them the Mahasanghikas.[13]

Only one inscription (Fleet, No. 75) of the Gupta age comes from Sarnath. It is from a sandstone bas-relief showing three scenes from the Buddha's life and is assigned, on palaeographic grounds, to the fifth century. It mentions that the image "has been caused to be made

vihars and the Mahayana establishment enjoyed support from royalty and state officials.[23] Further south, the old establishments at Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati had already long passed their prime, though the faith lingered on at Jaggayapeta and in Kerala and the names of Buddhaghosa, Buddhadatta and Dhammapala, celebrated Pali commentators, illumine the history of Buddhistic learning in South India from the fifth to the seventh century.[24] Yuan Chwang noticed "some hundred of *Samgharamas* and 10,000 priests" in Kanchipuram and the Dravida country.[25] Fa-Hsien states that there were twenty-two monasteries in Tamralipti where he stayed two years "writing out his *Sutras*, and drawing pictures of images." Unfortunately, he has little more to add. Yuan Chwang found there "about ten samgharamas, with about 1000 priests" whereas there were fifty Deva temples. Tamralipti-Tamluk lay on the Hooghly in West Bengal. In neighbouring Kalinga, or Orissa, Yuan Chwang found ten monasteries with five hundred priests of the Mahayana persuasion, but there were one hundred Deva temples with "very many unbelievers of different sorts."[26]

III

This survey of the state of Buddhism during the Gupta age reveals the existence of a large number of monasteries with thousands of monks. As mentioned above, the statements of the Chinese pilgrims cannot be taken at face value and should be regarded as exaggerations. What seems clear is that, though the old centers of Buddhism were in obvious decay and desolate, numerous new centers were flourishing, with impressive monasteries enjoying royal support. Of the life of the monks Fa-Hsien has this to say:

> "The regular business of the monks is to perform acts of meritorious virtue and to recite their Sutras and sit *wrapt* in meditation. When stranger monks arrive (at any monastery), the old residents meet and receive them, carry for them their clothes and alms-bowl, give them water to wash their feet, oil with which to anoint them, and the liquid food permitted out of the regular hours. When (the stranger) has enjoyed a very brief rest, they further ask the number of years that he has been a monk, after which he receives a sleeping apartment with its appurtenances, according to his regular order, and everything is done for him which the rules prescribe."

He further states that there was a practice of erecting stupas to

by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, among whom was Avalokitesvara, "the self-appointed votary seeking eagerly to procure happiness for his fellow-creatures at any cost, even if he must surrender his own right to spiritual advancement as the price." The ability of one person to transfer his own merit to others now looms large as a dominant belief, evidence of which appears in the votive inscriptions cited above in this chapter. Images of the two Bodhisattvas, Padmapani and Vajrapani were worshipped all over northern India and in Maharashtra during the Gupta age. Also worshipped was Manjusri, who conferred on his devotees qualities of intelligence, wisdom, memory and eloquence and his cult became popular from the fourth century A.D. onward.[46]

These developments paralleled similar movements in Hinduism expressed in the philosophy of the paths (*margas*) of ritual action (*karma*), selfless devotion (*bhakti*), and wisdom (*jnana*). The ethical earnestness of the old school was still there, but now it was heavily overlaid with elaborate ritual, image-worship and meditative and mystical practices and cults. The two outstanding texts of the Bodhisattva cult were Santideva's *Bodhicaryavatara* and the *Siksasamuccaya*, the first being called "the finest poem in Buddhism" and the latter a compendium of lore bearing on the training of the Bodhisattva and the Buddha.[47]

Mention must also be made here of the intellectuals assigned to this period. Among them were Dignaga (Dinnaga), the celebrated Buddhist logician, and Dharmapala who belonged to Vasubandhu's school; Sthiramati, the author of the *Ratnakuta*; and Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka, assigned to the beginning of the fifth century. Tradition associates the name Vasubandhu, "one of the most prominent figures in the history of Buddhist literature," with either Candra Gupta II or Kumara Gupta or both.[48]

Among the schools prominently mentioned by the Chinese travellers were the Mahasanghikas, the Sarvastivadins and the Sammitiyas. The Mahasanghikas are regarded as the precursors of the Mahayanists and date back to the time of the Second or Vesali Council. The Mahasanghikas were strong in Pataliputra, in Mathura, Western India, and Andhra. They developed their own views of the nature of Buddhahood and especially the Bodhisattva doctrine. The Sarvastivadins are so-called because of the attribution to them of the claim *sarvam asti* (everything exists) which really pertained to the ontological reality of certain elements. The Sammitiyas were strong in Valabhi in Saurastra and also at Nalanda. The old Theravadins were largely confined to the Tamil Nadu area and Sri Lanka.

The Buddhist educational system and art vividly reflect the intellectual

Hinduism in Thai Life

Santosh N. Desai

This study assesses the role of Hindu traditions in Thai life—their functional value, their significance to the Thai and the extent to which they were modified.

Thai society and culture are a conglomerate of multiple influences. Until the thirteenth century, the territory constituting the present Thailand remained merged or associated, with the neighbouring empires. A great variety of Hindu-Buddhist civilizations existed simultaneously or successively in the area. After the thirteenth century, with the coming of the Tai from Yunnan, Thailand became a political entity. It continued to receive other influences of external origin—Chinese, Islamic and Christian. Keeping fully in view the complex interaction of these diverse religious and cultural influences, the study attempts to analyze and identify its non-Buddhist Hindu components.

Within the Hindu components it seeks to identify the Brahmanical and the non-Brahmanical traditions of Hinduism. In the non-Buddhist aspects of Thai religious life and in social festivals, both Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical elements are to be found. In the concepts of Sacred State and the Divine Kingship, the Brahmanical Hinduism played an important part. However, in literature, especially in the Rama story, the religious epic of the HIndus, preference was shown for the non-Brahmanical.

The study is not a complete story of Thai life. It simply aims at identification of Hindu traditions from the rest with the caution that they do not exhaust the field, do not operate in isolation but have closely intermingled with other indigenous and non-indigenous elements.

Buddhism in Maharashtra : A History

B. G. Gokhale

"The author has painstakingly attempted for the first time a reconstruction of the history of Buddhism in Western India, especially the region now included in Maharashtra. The period that has been dealt with starts from about the third century B.C. to the eleventh century A.D....The book stands out as .. glaring testimony to the author's genius in its various manifestations. All praise for him."

—*Bhavan's Journal*

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